

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ABC WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR TEEN ALCOHOL PREVENTION PROGRAM**

**Sacramento** – The California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) has been honored by the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association (NLLEA) for its Decoy Shoulder Tap Program. The program received the award as the Innovative Liquor Law Enforcement Program of the Year, at the annual NLLEA conference held in Atlanta Georgia.

The Decoy Shoulder Tap Program is designed to identify adults who furnish alcohol to minors. Under the program, a minor, under the supervision of a law enforcement officer, stands outside a retail establishment and ask adults to buy him or her some alcohol. The decoy indicates to the adult they are underage and cannot buy the alcohol themselves.

If the adult purchases the alcohol for the minor, the person is then arrested and cited. The adult purchaser faces a minimum fine of \$1,000 and 24 hours of community service. The State Legislature recently increased this fine from \$250 dollars to \$1,000 after surveys indicated that “shoulder tapping” is a major way that minors obtain alcoholic beverages.

ABC Acting Director Jerry R. Jolly said, “We are pleased and honored to receive this award from the NLLEA. We believe this program will reduce the availability of alcohol to minors and drunk driving by minors, thus saving lives.”

Minors have a higher rate of drunk driving fatalities than adults in general.

During the last three years, ABC has been administering two federal grants issued through the Governor’s Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to conduct decoy shoulder tap operations throughout California. The first involved mini-grants funded by the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in which 19 local law enforcement agencies were given up to \$20,000 dollars to conduct the operations. The second federal grant was used by ABC investigators to conduct the program. During the course of the two grants, a total of 1814 people were arrested for furnishing alcohol to minors, or approximately 15% of all the people approached by the decoys.

Of the people arrested, over 23% had additional, unrelated violations, such as outstanding arrest warrants, parole and probation violations, under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs, and possession for sale of illegal substances.

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A study on the effectiveness of the grant program by Dr. Fried Wittman, Program Director for the Institute for the Study of Social Change at U.C. Berkeley said, "...the program...can be seen as a diagnostic instrument as well as an activity intended to strengthen local enforcement and change norms and behaviors regarding furnishing alcohol to minors." The study also indicated that "The Decoy Shoulder Tap Program...appeared to be helpful in shifting community norms to favor reduced retail availability to minors."

Said Jolly, "We are pleased the federal government as well as other liquor law enforcement agencies around the country have recognized how important this program is to reducing teen drunk driving fatalities. We intend to continue Shoulder Tap operations until adults recognize the seriousness of furnishing alcohol to minors and the potential tragedies this kind of activity poses to young people."

The program has the strong support of the California Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) and many other anti-alcohol abuse coalition groups. Most of the local law enforcement agencies in California also use the Shoulder Tap Program in their communities as an effective tool to reduce the accessibility of alcohol by minors. Many use the program as one strategy in a more comprehensive program under ABC's Grant Assistance Program (GAP) for local law enforcement.

ABC is a department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, which is under the direction of Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet, a member of the Governor's Cabinet.